



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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**SHA BEGINS WORK TO REPLACE, WIDEN I-70 BRIDGES OVER MD 63
IN WASHINGTON COUNTY**

Work to be Coordinated with Similar Project on Nearby Conococheague Creek Bridges One Mile to the West; Motorists Should Prepare for Traffic Shifts, Lane Closures, Speed Enforcement

(December 11, 2012) – This month the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is beginning construction on a nearly two-year-long project to reconstruct and widen the I-70 bridges over MD 63 (Greencastle Pike), west of Hagerstown.

The \$14 million project is similar to one that began last summer approximately one mile to the west at the I-70 bridges over Conococheague Creek. Both sets of dual bridges were originally built in the 1960s and, though they remain safe, are due for replacement as part of SHA's bridge preservation and replacement program. Both projects will be complete by fall 2014, weather permitting.

"SHA's proactive bridge replacement program ensures bridges are replaced before their maintenance becomes cost prohibitive and long before safety problems develop," SHA Administrator Melinda B. Peters said. "In this case, the replacements also presented an opportunity to enhance safety and plan for the future by widening the bridges."

Like the Conococheague Creek bridges, the MD 63 dual bridges will be widened to the inside, with two traffic lanes in each direction with a wide inner shoulder. The new MD 63 bridges will each be about 51 feet wide, 13 feet wider than the existing bridges. The additional width is enough to accommodate a third lane of I-70 should the interstate be widened in the future. In the interim, the wide shoulders provide more room for drivers to pull over in an emergency.

"We appreciate everyone's patience as we work to complete these projects with as little inconvenience as possible to the traveling public," said Anthony Crawford, SHA District Engineer for Washington County.

The bridges will remain open during construction, with traffic lanes shifted to the outer sides of the bridges while crews construct the new inner portions, then shifted to the inside while crews reconstruct the outer sections. Motorists should also anticipate occasional temporary single-lane closures during off-peak hours. Approximately 46,000 vehicles per day travel along I-70 near MD 63 so motorists should plan extra travel time during construction.

(More)

I-70 Bridges

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“We will coordinate closely between this project and the Conococheague Creek bridge replacement to keep traffic flowing as smoothly as possible, but it is important for drivers to stay alert in this area, slow down and drive carefully through the work zones,” Crawford added.

SHA’s contractor for the project is C. William Hetzer, Inc. of Hagerstown. Crews have begun preliminary work at the construction site and over the next few weeks will begin widening the outside shoulders of the approaches to the bridge in preparation to shift traffic lanes to the left. When that shift is complete, crews can begin demolition of the inside edge of the bridge.

Later this winter, SHA will reduce the speed limit in the work zone to 55 mph and deploy *Maryland SafeZones* automated speed enforcement. Automated speed enforcement, which uses photography and laser technology to document speeders traveling 12 or more mph over the legal limit, is already in place in the work zone for the Conococheague Creek bridge replacement. More information about the program is available at www.safezones.maryland.gov.

For more information and updates throughout the project, visit <http://bit.ly/md63bridge> or call SHA’s District 6 office at 301-729-8400.

While SHA and its partners work hard to maintain safe traffic mobility in work zones, each driver needs to actively modify his or her driving style to help prevent crashes. Stay alert – look for reduced speed limits, narrow driving lanes and highway workers. Slow down and don't follow too closely. *Safer Driving. Safer Work Zones. For Everyone!*

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SHA is making it easy to get safety tips and information on the go through Twitter @MDSHA and on Facebook at <http://www.Facebook.com/MarylandStateHighwayAdministration>.

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